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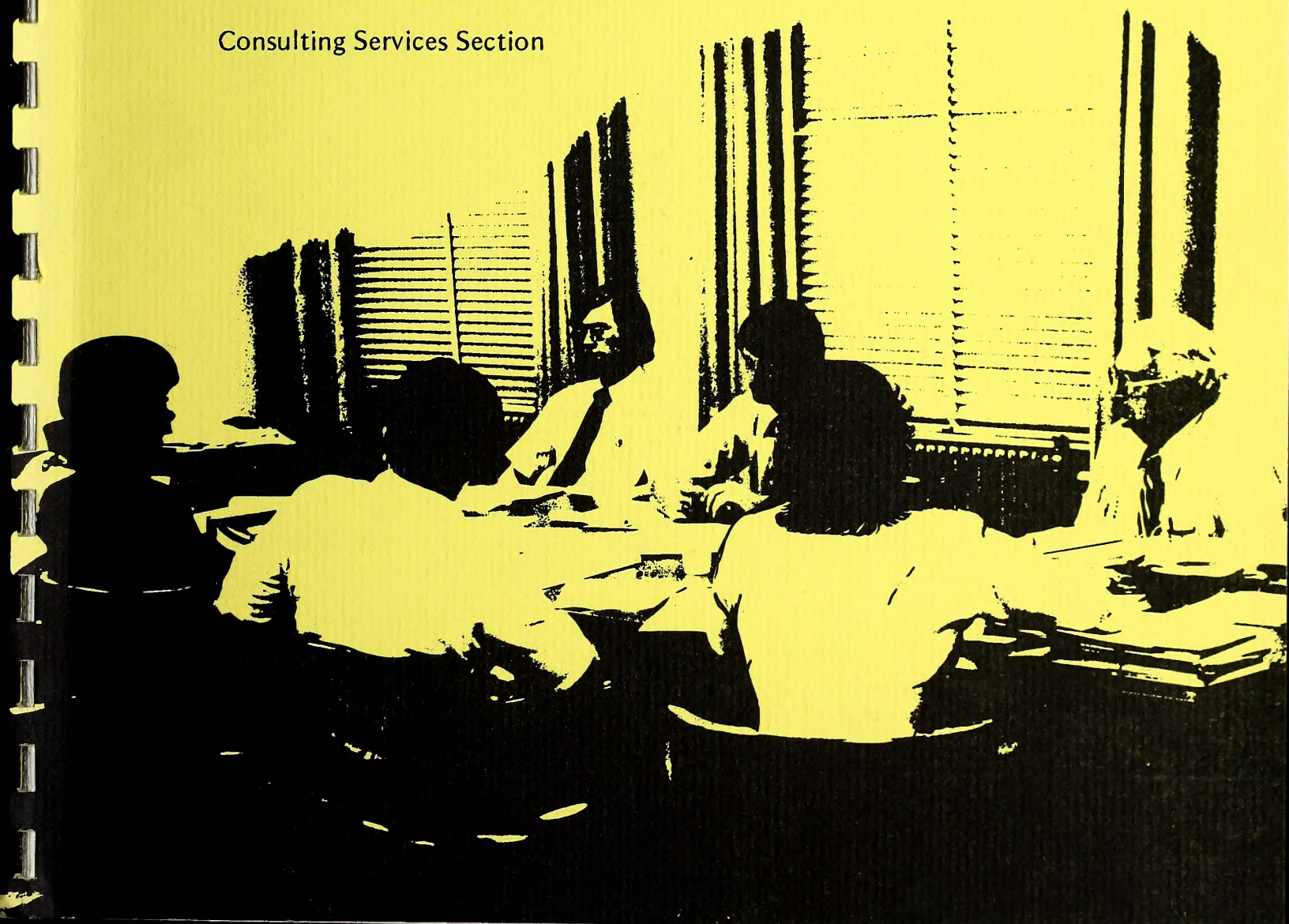
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# Manual for Parks and Recreation Commission and Committee Members

North Carolina Department of Natural Resources and Community Development  
Division of Parks and Recreation

Consulting Services Section







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Consulting Services Section  
Division of Parks and Recreation  
North Carolina Department of Natural Resources  
and Community Development





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## INTRODUCTION

In the public sector, a long time area of citizen involvement has been service on a park and recreation commission or committee. Since the establishment of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, in 1906, progress in the field of park/recreation has been greatly accelerated by commission/committee leadership provided by concerned citizens.

State enabling legislation provides for the establishment of Park/Recreation commissions. Park/Recreation committees are voluntary groups established by the Park/Recreation commission, or the local governing body to assist in the carrying out of recreation service.

The services of dedicated laymen, serving as commission/committee members, have assisted in advancing the Park/Recreation movement. Much of the success of local programs can be attributed to these laymen.

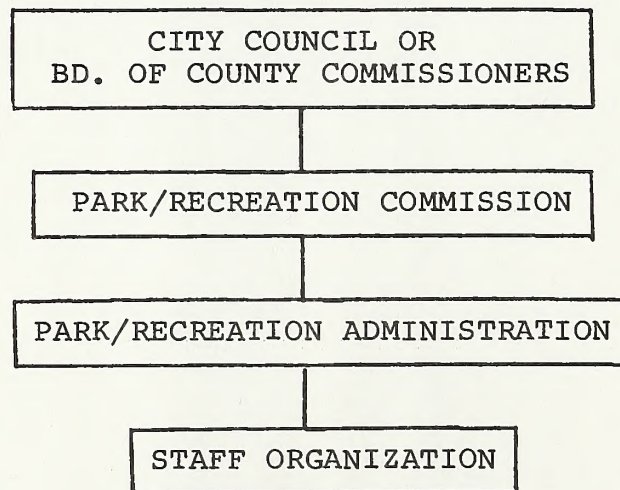
## PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

A park and recreation commission is a policy making body and has authority over the recreation and park services. Even with this authority these commissions are not totally separate from the public jurisdiction which created them. They remain dependent on the government for ultimate decision making and funding. The commission may be appointed by the mayor and city council and/or the county commissioners and be delegated the policy making and administrative authority to manage its own affairs in providing recreation service. The commission submits periodic reports to the city council or board of county commissioners and presents its budget to the governing body for approval.

This policy making body has full authority and responsibility over the recreation programs, services, and facilities of the department, as well as its personnel.

The governing authority has a series of checks or controls over the commission--appointment or removal from office, power of appropriations, authority to review budgets, and progress review of the department.

Organizational Chart of the  
Park and Recreation Commission:





## QUALIFICATIONS OF COMMISSION MEMBERS

When evaluating ideal board members for appointment, it is important to consider the qualifications of those individuals who would make successful contributions to the goals and objectives of the department.

These basic qualities include:

1. Interest in parks and recreation and a commitment to the beliefs and values of the movement.
2. Sensitive to the residents of the community--their needs and wishes.
3. Ability to understand and interpret the needs and interests of the total community.
4. Ability to work well with others.
5. Good judgment, intelligence, and ability to know and understand the total community.
6. Ability to inspire the confidence, respect, and support of the community.
7. Availability to attend meetings.

## SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF COMMISSION

Local ordinances or resolutions determine the size of the park and recreation commission. It is generally recognized by the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation that the park and recreation commission be composed of approximately seven (7) to nine (9) members. Each term of office shall be of three (3) years duration with no member being allowed to serve more than two (2) consecutive terms.

For a commission to be successful it must be as broadly representative of a community as possible. The commission should be well balanced with both men and women, members representing young, middle, and older age groups, different leisure interests, individuals from different social, economic, educational, racial, and occupational backgrounds, and of different geographical areas of the community.



The effective commission is one which is committed to serving the total community and makes every effort to reflect the viewpoints of the whole community through its representatives.

### COMMISSION FUNCTIONS

The basic consideration in the formation of a commission is that it be organized and developed in such a way as to best carry out the purposes and functions for which it was created.

The size, compositions, organization, duties and responsibilities and operation of these bodies will vary with the authority delegated to them by the local governing unit.

The principal function of the park and recreation commission is to determine and formulate policies for the effective management of park and recreation services. Some of the basic functions of the park and recreation commission are<sup>1</sup>:

1. To define the objectives of public park/recreation services.
2. To maintain the highest quality of park/recreation service.
3. To interpret the importance and need of park/recreation services to the general public.
4. To keep public officials informed of the status and progress of park/recreation services.
5. To select the park and recreation executive (and other personnel) and to determine his or her duties and responsibilities for all staff.
6. To establish a sound fiscal plan to achieve specific park/recreation goals.
7. To provide an adequate system of park/recreation areas and facilities.
8. To evaluate the services of the park/recreation system in relation to its objectives.
9. To provide a close liaison and coordination with other related community agencies to insure a total cooperative, community effort to provide the most effective, economical park/recreation services available.
10. To carry out its legal responsibilities and adopt by-laws to govern the organization and operation of the commission.
11. To inform and educate the public of the importance and need for park/recreation programs, facilities and services.



12. To establish and maintain an effective public relations program utilizing all appropriate communications media.
13. To keep the public informed of the status and progress of park/recreation services.

#### PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION ORGANIZATION

The organization of the commission is in accordance with the legal provisions which established it. While the North Carolina Enabling Law is rather general in nature many commissions have established a system of what are called 'by-laws' for the conduct and guidance of their business affairs. "By-laws are merely the enactment of rules and regulations to provide guidelines for commission action. They spell out in greater detail the provisions for the operation of the commission. For example, the time and place of meetings, committee organization, and suggested agenda to be followed at meetings. It is not unusual to see incorporated in a written statement of by-laws, matters of general policy of the commission. In fact, some by-laws incorporate commission organization, statements of policy, and general rules and regulations."<sup>2</sup>

To provide for the effective guidance and organization for park/recreation commissions, these by-laws should include:

1. Authority to operate: The legal provisions which establish and outline the commissions duties, responsibilities, authority, and other necessary details.
2. Membership: This includes such details as who appoints the members and for how long they have been appointed. This could also include the handling of term vacancies either by resignation or otherwise.
3. Officers: This usually prescribes that there be a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer, elected annually. It is desirable to specify the following requirements under this section:
  - a. The Secretary of the commission need not be a regular member of the commission. He may be the park and recreation executive or some other person designated by the commission to act in this capacity.
  - b. The specific duties and responsibilities of each of the officers should be included in this section.
4. Committees: This provides for the appointment of standing and special committees as necessary. There are certain considerations which should be discussed before establishing committees:
  - a. When and wherever possible the commission should operate as a 'committee of the whole' to provide for greater committee teamwork in its many deliberations and decisions.



- b. Standing or special committees should be established by the commission only when deemed necessary and feasible.
  - c. It is essential that these committees be given definite guidelines, functions, requirements and restrictions.
  - d. Committee action should be restricted to the action of making recommendations and the performing of the duties specifically authorized by the commission.
  - e. The standing committees may include finance management, program, personnel, public relations, facilities, and long range planning.
5. Meetings: The commission should hold regular meetings (at least monthly) that are open to the public and media representatives. Some points to consider when scheduling and holding meetings are:
- a. The commission should determine a regular meeting date and time at the first meeting of each year. A time should be set which enables members to attend regularly and which is convenient for public attendance and participation.
  - b. The commission should publicize meetings to stimulate involvement by the general public. Included should be date, time, place and agenda.
  - c. The commission meetings should be well planned. A definite written agenda with all of the supporting information and material for each agenda item. The minutes of the previous meeting should be sent to the commission members for review and preparation five (5) days prior to any regular commission meeting. Both a commission quorum requirement and the order of commission business should be established. A suggested order of business is:<sup>3</sup>
    - 1) Call to order
    - 2) Roll call (quorum must be present)
    - 3) Reading and approval of minutes from last meeting
    - 4) Petitions and communications
    - 5) Report of executive
    - 6) Unfinished business
    - 7) New business
    - 8) Miscellaneous and announcements
    - 9) Comments from citizen groups or individuals
    - 10) Adjournment
  - d. A complete record of each meeting should be kept, and the minutes of each meeting recorded, secured, and made available to any citizen who wishes to review them. These reports should be kept in the business office of the park/recreation department. A copy should be on file in the administrative office of the local unit.



e. Attendance at commission meetings is imperative, as a member cannot contribute if he is not present. To increase attendance at meetings, the commission may:

- 1) Insert into the by-laws a stipulation concerning attendance.
- 2) Officially record attendance and absences of members at each meeting and continually summarize the attendance records.
- 3) Establish a quorum of at least fifty (50) percent.
- 4) Follow up mailing of meeting notice and agenda five (5) days in advance with a personal telephone call the day before the meeting as a final reminder.
- 5) Designate a specific time and place each month for the next meeting.

f. Members of the commission should know the basics of parliamentary procedure.

6. Finances: Clarifies the authority, responsibility and function of the commission for the departments budget and finance program. Some items to include in financial duties and responsibilities include:

- a. Specific procedures for the efficient handling, spending, and accounting for all department funds. These procedures should be established in coordination with the fiscal control officer of the local government.
- b. Require and review monthly a written financial statement of appropriations, expenditures, receipts and balances.
- c. Preparation and presentation to the local governing unit an annual operating budget to finance the park/recreation program.
- d. Recommendations to the local governing unit of a budget for capital improvements in accordance with the local Master Plan for park/recreation.

7. Authority of Members: The commission should clearly define the authority of its members. Some desirable requirements should include:

- a. The commission should not be bound in any way by any statement or action on the part of any individual commission member, except when such statement or action is in pursuance of specific instructions by the commission.
- b. Commission members have no authority as individuals. They should be careful to conduct all business in legal meetings. Complaints and/or other communications should be heard in the commission meeting, not by individual commissioners.



8. Amendments: This clearly establishes the procedures and requirements for the amending of sections of the by-laws. There should be included the requirement of the notice of the proposed amendment to be submitted in writing to all commission members at least one (1) week prior to the next regularly scheduled meeting.

## RELATIONSHIPS

### Commission Relationship with Staff and Local Groups

A requisite component of a park/recreation commission is to create and maintain effective working agreements with the park/recreation department, personnel, the governing body, other related community organizations, and the public.

In relation to the park/recreation department, the commission should:

1. Make periodic visits and observations of areas and facilities to ensure professional operation, maintenance and management.
2. Makes periodic observation of all program activities and services (both in a scheduled and unscheduled manner).
3. Participates actively in the interpretation of the departments services, objectives, and needs.

In relation to the personnel of the department, the commission should:

1. Assure for the staff of its department the same consideration with respect to working hours, employee benefits as they apply to comparable staff in other organizations.
2. Adopt an official personnel policy that ensures the employment of a competent professional oriented staff, a sound division of duties and responsibilities, a fair and equitable salary schedule, and reasonable and satisfactory working conditions.
3. Deal officially with the staff only through its chief executive (park/recreation).
4. Establish a clear-cut grievance procedure to be followed by all employees.
5. Arrange for appeals from staff members to be submitted to the commission.
6. Invite members of the supervisory staff to meet with the commission when programs and problems relating to their part of the department are under consideration.



In relation to the governing body of the local unit, the commission should:

1. Familiarize themselves with the local ordinances relating to policies.
2. Meet with the governing body from time to time in formal session when policies need to be discussed.
3. Support the overall program of the governing body which supports good public relations.
4. When making recommendations or decisions concerning the governing body, support them with written facts, oral communications, and action if necessary.

In relation to other organizations and groups interested in park/recreation services, the commission should:

1. With its chief executive, develop cooperative planning and programs with other public, voluntary, church, commercial, and industrial agencies concerned with recreation, parks, conservation and leisure activities.
2. Coordinate and cooperate with local planning authorities to insure effective planning of total community services along with adequate provision for parks and recreation.

Finally, in relationship with the public, the commission should:

1. Take the initiative in forming neighborhood and community park/recreation councils, when such is indicated, and in bringing together periodically informal groups representing people interested in and concerned with park/recreation, for a discussion of mutual problems and as an aid in cooperative planning.
2. Welcome suggestions and constructive criticism from the general public and assures them that they will receive thoughtful consideration and appropriate action when warranted.
3. Conduct its affairs in a manner that wins public respect and support for the department.
4. Be responsive and responsible, and represent the interest of the entire community.



## Park/Recreation Executive Relationship With Commission

Basic to the success of the commission and the department's operation is the relationship between the commission and the department's chief executive.

The building of this team and partnership relationship between the commission and the chief executive begins with the establishment of a clear cut job description which prescribes the executive duties and responsibilities in detail.

This job descriptor should include the following information:

1. General statement of duties. The Director is the Chief Executive officer of the department and its personnel. He is responsible for the management of both recreation and park functions, including the development of comprehensive recreation programs and the operational developmental phases of public park/recreation areas and facilities of the department. The Director serves as the technical advisor and consultant to the department's Park and Recreation Commission. He has the executive responsibility for the development and maintenance of the highest level of public park/recreation services possible for all residents of the community.
2. Principal duties of Director.
  - a. Organize and direct the services of the department in accordance with the established department provisions and policy manual.
  - b. Prepares, justifies and controls the budget as specified by local and state budget laws.
  - c. Supervises the total department financial operation.
  - d. Recruits, recommends and selects (subject to approval) all professional and other personnel necessary for the successful operation of the department.
  - e. Establishes departmental priorities in the determination of future needs for areas, facilities, and programs; prepares long-term plans to meet these needs.
  - f. Counsels with community groups and individuals to determine program needs, area and facility requirements and improvements, and interprets the scope and purpose of present operations and points out program deficiencies and areas in which expansion and improvement are needed.
  - g. Gives direction and guidance to department staff by defining standards and principles of operation and together with the commission and staff establishes department goals and objectives.
  - h. Considers all department goals and establishes priorities to help meet goals.



- i. Establishes and maintains cooperative planning programs and working relationships with other local agencies - governmental, voluntary, private -- and with the state, regional and national agencies concerned with park/recreation programming, facilities and services.
- j. Keeps abreast of local, state, and federal legislative grant-in-aid programs and determines extent department should become involved in grant programs.
- k. Maintains systematic, complete, and accurate records of department activities and services, personnel, property and finances; provides an effective system of continuous interpretation, promotion, publicity, and an accounting of the services of the department.

3. Principal duties of the Commission.

- a. Selects and employs the best chief executive possible in accordance with nationally recommended standards.
- b. Supports and encourages the chief executive and works with him as a partner to develop and maintain an effective team approach to department problems.
- c. Requires the chief executive to submit a written monthly report and other reports as necessary.
- d. Adopts a policy that individual commission members shall not give instructions to the chief executive except as related to specific committee assignments and only after the approval of the commission in official session.
- e. Requests the Chief Executive to submit recommendations on all problems to be considered by the commission that relate to policies and procedures, programs, personnel, budget facilities and other matters on which professional advice would be useful in reaching a decision.
- f. Gives the Chief Executive full authority and responsibility for administering policy or seeing that the action is taken when it had adopted policy or approved a course of action.
- g. Encourages the Chief Executive to initiate suggestions and bring to the attention of the commission matters requiring policy decisions which will increase the effectiveness of the department.
- h. Holds the Chief Executive ultimately responsible for the success or failure of the department within the limitations in which he must work. If necessary, replace the chief executive.
- i. Encourages its Chief Executive and other staff members to attend state, regional, and national meetings and to take an active part in professional organizations, attend



institutes and training courses to improve and expand professional competence.

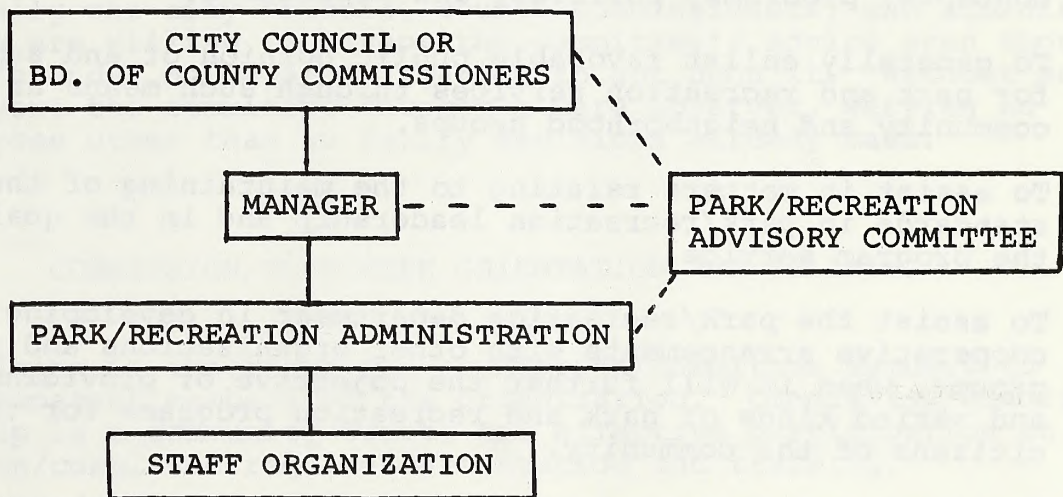


## PARK AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The advisory committee is frequently used in North Carolina. It has no final authority or responsibility for policy making or administrative control. As its name implies, it is only advisory to the governing body, manager and administrator. Though the committee has no legal authority, it may serve important functions in the interpretation of the program, facilities, services, and in making studies which help advance park and recreation services.

Advisory committees are most useful when their function and responsibility is clearly understood and practiced. They should understand that they have no established legal status for authority, but that they are vitally important as liaison for improving the leisure opportunities of a community.

### Organizational Chart of the Advisory Committee



### ADVISORY COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS

The principal function of the advisory committee is to advise and make recommendations to the park/recreation executive, manager of the local of the local unit and the governing body.

The advisory committee should perform many of the same functions as the commission, except that it does not have the decision making authority of the commission. The advisory committee, also, does not get into the selection process of the chief executive thought it may recommend and advise on personnel.



Some of the basic functions of the advisory park/recreation committee include:

1. To investigate and determine the needs and interests of the community for recreation facilities and programs and recommend a recreation program to meet these needs.
2. To interpret and advise of these needs to the governing body, manager and the park/recreation executive.
3. To interpret the community recreation program and needs to public officials and the general citizenship.
4. To recommend and help secure a comprehensive master plan and other studies for parks and recreation for the acquisition and development of an adequate system of parks, facilities and recreation programs.
5. To recommend and advise on the acceptance of any grant, gift, bequest or donation, any personal or real property made available for park/recreation purposes.
6. To serve as a forum in the introduction of innovative new ideas, concepts, programs, policies, and procedures.
7. To generally enlist favorable public opinion of and support for park and recreation services through such means as community and neighborhood groups.
8. To assist in matters relating to the maintaining of the highest standards in park/recreation leadership and in the quality of the program service.
9. To assist the park/recreation department in developing cooperative arrangements with other organizations and private groups, when it will further the objective of providing more and varied kinds of park and recreation programs for the citizens of the community.
10. To advise and assist in the preparation of a park/recreation department budget.
11. To assist the park/recreation department in recruiting voluntary leadership staff to work with park/recreation programs and activities.
12. To assist the park/recreation staff in evaluating recreation programs and activities.
13. To assist the department in developing program priorities.



Advisory committees, by their very nature, seldom make major decisions but frequently are involved in actions leading to major decisions. According to Arlin F. Epperson,<sup>4</sup> Department of Park and Recreation Administration, University of Missouri, successful park and recreation advisory committees tend to:

1. Maintain a clear cut division of responsibility between itself, its parent body, and the professional staff. It must remember that it makes general recommendations only and has no administrative authority or responsibilities.
2. Is responsible for advising on basic policies which guide the department. The administration of the policy--the actual provision of the park and recreation service--is a technical problem which requires a trained staff.
3. Recognizes that its recommendations to the city council, county commissioners, and department administration will not always be followed. The committee should not take this rejection as a personal affront. However, if the committee secures the personal facts on matters referred to it, deliberates carefully, and acts subjectively its recommendations will become the basic policies for the operation of the department.
4. Usually the city council, county commissioners, and administration are willing to accept the committee's advice even though it is under no legal obligation to act upon it. Without such support the committee becomes a mere observer, serving no purpose other than to ratify decisions already made.

#### COMMISSION/COMMITTEE ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

Training is important for commission/committee members to become competent members of the organization. Commission/committee membership is a community trust, and effective participation on a commission/committee requires orientation and training.

A well planned, thorough training program for commission/committee members is most important. Included in this training program each person should be provided a department operations and procedures manual.

Robert Artz<sup>5</sup>, National Recreation and Park Association, suggests the following basic orientation information be provided:

1. Legal provisions.
  - a. The authority to operate; legal functions.
  - b. State laws and city ordinances concerning conflict of interest.
2. Department policy statement-objectives-history.



3. Functions of the department.
  - a. Rules and Regulations
  - b. Organization-meetings-committees
  - c. Board duties and responsibilities
4. Administrative organization.
  - a. Powers and duties of the chief park and recreation executive
  - b. Organizational structure
  - c. Personnel policies and practices
  - d. Staff names and positions
5. Established department policies.
  - a. Department services and other cooperative services--school planning commissions, etc.
  - b. Use of facilities--equipment and supplies
  - c. Purchasing
  - d. Insurance
  - e. General fees and charges
  - f. Clubs
  - g. Contributions--land, funds
6. Departmental operational information.
  - a. Planning-development-guidelines, master plan standards
  - b. Financial structure-budget
  - c. Areas and facilities
  - d. Programs-activities-special services
  - e. Public relations-annual reports, brochures, other
7. Park/Recreation education-information.
  - a. Park/recreation concepts and philosophy
  - b. Benefits-individuals, organizations, community



8. Selected literature and publications especially applicable to commission/committee functions and operations, such as the National Parks and Recreation monthly magazine, PARKS AND RECREATION, and the RECREATION AND PARK REVIEW published by the North Carolina Recreation and Park Society.

It is of value for new and returning commissioners to attend seminars and conferences at the state, regional and national levels. The Park and Recreation Division of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Economic Resources annually sponsor regional seminars across the state to better acquaint commissioners with the duties and functions they will be expected to fulfill in their new or continuing role. In addition the Board/Commission Division of the North Carolina Recreation and Park Society sponsors workshops in conjunction with the NCRPS annual conference. Similar training and in-service education is available through the National Recreation and Park Association at the National Congress each fall and at the Southern Conference each spring.

The three major areas in which commission members need continuous training are:

1. The activities and services provided by the park and recreation department, including full up-to-date information and material on the total organization and operation of the department.
2. The interests and behaviors of the community or area served by the department, including current facts and data as to total community goals, needs, and resources, and how and where the department fits into the total community picture.
3. The functions of the commission itself, including the complete organization and operation of the commission, its functions, responsibilities, requirements, and the full information and materials on the duties and responsibilities of individual members with guidelines and techniques to insure effective individual commission member participation to achieve both the concept of commission teamwork, and a close partnership with the chief park/recreation executive and professional staff.



BY-LAWS GOVERNING  
THE  
RECREATION

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 1:

a. Regular meetings of the Recreation \_\_\_\_\_ shall be held at \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_ of each month and shall be held in the Office of \_\_\_\_\_, or at some other designated place.

b. Special meetings may be called by the Chairman or upon written request from a majority of the body.

c. A majority of the members constitute a quorum.

d. The order of business at regular meetings shall be as follows:

Reading of minutes of previous meetings  
Communications  
Report of Director and Chairman  
Special Reports  
Unfinished Business  
New Business  
Adjournment

e. The absence of any member from three consecutive regular meetings without leave except when such absence is made necessary by sickness or other similar causes, ruled as emergency in nature will declare vacant the seat of such member, in which event the vacancy this created shall be filled by the \_\_\_\_\_.

ARTICLE 2:

a. The election of officers for the ensuing year, a Chairman and Vice-Chairman, shall take place at the regular meeting in June of each year. A nominating committee of three members shall be appointed by the Chairman, at the May meeting (or before) to bring in, to the June meeting, nominees for these offices.

b. The new officers shall take office at the regular July meeting each year.

ARTICLE 3:

a. It shall be the duty of the Chairman to preside at all meetings and to sign official papers.

b. The Vice-Chairman shall perform duties of the Chairman in the absence of the latter.



#### ARTICLE 4:

The Director (when one is employed) shall serve as secretary of the Recreation \_\_\_\_\_. It shall be the duty of the secretary to notify members of all meetings, to keep a permanent record of the proceedings of all meetings, and to have a copy of the proceedings of each meeting sent to each member.

#### ARTICLE 5:

The Recreation \_\_\_\_\_, shall advise with the Director concerning the administration of the affairs of recreation. The Director shall be the agent of the Recreation \_\_\_\_\_ and to that end shall supervise the operation of all the recreation department's activities. The Director shall submit a detailed report of the activities and administration of the program of the Recreation Department to each regular meeting for the month prior to the meeting. A copy of this report shall be sent to each member and to \_\_\_\_\_.

#### ARTICLE 6:

a. Standing committees shall be appointed by the Chairman at the regular July meeting of each year. Vacancies on the standing committees shall be filled by the Chairman at any regular meeting.

b. Standing Committees are as follows:

##### (1) Plans and Finance - 3 members

It shall be the duty of the Plans and Finance Committee to assist in setting up the recommended program plan and budget for the ensuing fiscal year. It shall, further be the responsibility of the Plans and Finance Committee to assist the Director, the Chairman of the Recreation \_\_\_\_\_ in explaining and justifying the final drafts of the recommended budget and program plan to the Recreation \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ (local governing body) and to the public in order that the desired program will be implemented by adequate funds.

##### (2) Facilities - 3 members

This committee will study the need, use, demand, and availability of areas and facilities (including water areas) and make recommendation on acquisition, development, use and operation of all areas and facilities owned, used, leased or proposed to be acquired by the recreation department.



(3) Nominating - 3 members

Present slate of officers to be acted upon at the regular meeting in July.

ARTICLE 7:

The Director shall submit preliminary annual reports, of the program and of finances at the regular meeting in July of each year. The final Annual Report will be rendered no later than the September meeting.

ARTICLE 8:

Special committees may be appointed for such purposes as deemed necessary.

ARTICLE 9:

The Chairman and Director shall be ex-officio members of all committees and, as such, notified of all committee meetings.

ARTICLE 10:

All amendments to these rules must be proposed in writing in one meeting and is acted upon at the next regular meeting.



FOOTNOTES

1. Rodney L. S., ADMINISTRATION OF PUBLIC RECREATION, p96-97
2. Ibid pl01
3. Ibid pl04
4. Epperson A.F., MISSOURI PARK BOARDS: TYPES, AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES, p2552
5. Artz R.M., CITIZEN LEADERSHIP, pl10 and 125





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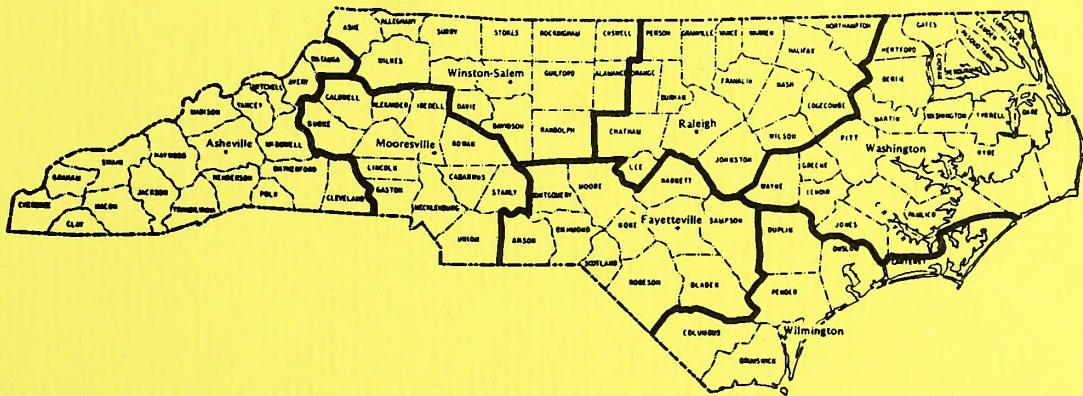
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